

What is Claimed:

1. In a method for producing a shell coating on a mass of pharmaceutical centers, comprising dispensing a coating solution onto the centers and drying the coated centers with a current of drying gas, wherein the improvement comprises making a direct measurement of the moisture content of the surface of the coated centers of the mass using a moisture sensor, drying the drying gas to a dew point sufficiently low to dry the coated centers, and drying the coated centers until the moisture content of the surface of the coated centers is about 0 to about 30 percent water, by weight.
2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the drying gas is dried to a dew point of no more than about 5°C.
3. The method according to claim 1, wherein the drying gas is dried to a dew point of from about -15°C to about 0°C.
4. The method according to claim 1, wherein the centers have at least one of a melting or degradation temperature of a surface, and the method further comprises making a direct measurement of the temperature of the surface of the coated centers of the mass, and drying the coated centers by adjusting the temperature of the drying gas to a temperature higher than that of the melting or degradation temperature in response to the direct temperature measurement of the surface of the coated centers, while maintaining the temperature of the surface of the coated centers at a temperature less than the melting or degradation temperature of the surface.
5. The method according to claim 4, wherein melting or degradation temperature of the surface is less than about 50°C.
6. The method according to claim 4, further comprising maintaining the surface of the coated centers at a temperature less than the melting or degradation temperature of the coated centers by adiabatic cooling.

7. A method for producing a shell coating on a mass of pharmaceutical centers, comprising the steps of:

- (a) placing a mass of pharmaceutical centers having a melting or degradation temperature of a surface in a coating vessel;
- (b) intermixing the mass of centers;
- (c) dispensing a coating solution onto the mass of centers;
- (d) making a direct measurement of the moisture content of the surface of the coated centers of the mass using a moisture sensor;
- (e) making a direct measurement of the temperature of the surface of the coated centers of the mass, and drying the coated centers by adjusting the temperature of the drying gas to a temperature higher than that of the melting or degradation temperature in response to the direct temperature measurement of the surface of the coated centers, while maintaining the temperature of the surface of the coated centers at a temperature less than the melting or degradation temperature of the surface;
- (f) drying the coated centers by passing a current of drying gas through the coating vessel until the surface moisture of the coated centers is about 0 to about 30 percent water, by weight; and
- (g) producing a finished product.

8. The method according to claim 7, wherein melting or degradation temperature of the surface is less than about 50°C.

9. The method according to claim 7, further comprising maintaining the surface of the coated centers at a temperature less than the melting or degradation temperature of the coated centers by adiabatic cooling.

10. The method according to claim 7, further comprising repeating steps (c) through (f) a number of times sufficient to produce the finished product.

11. The method according to claim 7, further comprising drying the drying gas to a dew point of no more than about 5°C.

12. The method according to claim 7, further comprising drying the drying gas to a dew point of from about -15° to about 0°C.

13. The method according to claim 7, wherein the centers are dried to a surface moisture content of from about 0 to about 10 percent.

14. In a method for producing a shell coating on a mass of pharmaceutical centers having a melting or degradation temperature of a surface, comprising dispensing a coating solution onto the centers and drying the coated centers with a current of drying gas, wherein the improvement comprises:

(a) making a direct measurement of the temperature of the surface of the coated centers of the mass, and drying the coated centers by adjusting the temperature of the drying gas to a temperature higher than that of the melting or degradation temperature in response to the direct temperature measurement of the surface of the coated centers, while maintaining the temperature of the surface of the coated centers at a temperature less than the melting or degradation temperature of the surface; and

(b) monitoring the moisture content of the surface of the coated centers of the mass by making a direct measurement of the moisture content of the centers using a moisture sensor while drying the coated centers until the moisture content of the surface of the coated centers is about 0 to about 30 percent water, by weight.

15. The method according to claim 14, wherein the melting or degradation temperature of the surface is less than about 50°C.

16. The method according to claim 14, further comprising drying the drying gas to a dew point of no more than about 5°C.

17. The method according to claim 14, further comprising drying the drying gas to a dew point of from about -15° to about 0°C.

18. The method according to claim 14, wherein the centers are dried to a surface moisture content of from about 0 to about 10 percent.

19. The method according to claim 14, further comprising maintaining the surface of the coated centers at a temperature less than the melting or degradation temperature of the coated centers by adiabatic cooling.